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565 554 *Etsu*), and 14 to the house of Umaru, the present ruling house. The death of a high rank-holder and the subsequent appointment of a successor is frequently made an occasion for a far-reaching reshuffle of ranks, called in Nupe *wíruwíru*. It goes hand in hand with a large-scale exchange of houses, younger brothers or sons moving into the vacated house of their older brothers or fathers (vacated by death or promotion), for the state residence of the highest *gitsú* ranks goes with the title. Rarely would a new house be built in Bida to-day for a *wací*, a Great One, as the members of the royal nobility are also called; 'only *talakaši*, Poor Ones', said an informant, 'must build themselves new homes.' Appointment to a first rank and promotion to a higher rank is granted by the king in council with royal princes and the other officers of state. Any able-bodied man in the Fulani families who has reached senior age and who has proved his ability and loyalty can claim to be admitted to the ranks of the titled *gitsúši*.[1] But there is no rule. Favouritism, intrigues, bribes [557] play their part in appointment and promotion. The ranks which a family can accumulate reflects its influence at the court and its favour with the ruling king. It is no accident that the royal house of the last *Etsu* (who had only just died) counts more ranks than either of the other two dynasties. Unlike the system of ranks which we found in the village these royal ranks do not leave an old man or an invalid who can no longer fulfil his duties in the possession of his office. In such a case a younger man is appointed to the rank, and the old holder is known as the 'Old *Kpotũ*', or whatever the rank may be. A similar difference between the rank systems of village and state lies in that perfect health is an indispensable condition of appointments to any state rank. Deformity, even [732] of the slightest kind, is ruled out. The younger brother of one of the Emirs of Bida, who had a withered arm, was unable to obtain any title at all. In the state system of ranks, which was based on service in the war [555] and on offices vital to the safety of the state, respect for old age or consideration for even minor disablements has no place.

The investiture—it is the same for royal princes and for officers of state—is an interesting ceremony, an impressive proclamation of the main facts on which the feudal kingdom is built: social promotion, the oath of fealty and loyalty and responsibility towards king and country. A propitious day for the investiture is first fixed by Mallams or diviners. Then follows the invitation to the ceremony—gifts of kola-nuts sent by the candidate to all men of rank and standing. Drummers in the house of the *Etsu* announce the beginning of the ceremony; all rank-holders are assembled in the *Etsu*'s house. He addresses the candidate ceremonially, proclaiming three times his appointment. The *Alkali* (or *Liman*), as representative of the clergy of the kingdom, clothes the candidate in an embroidered gown and rich cloak—gifts of the *Etsu*—and places a turban on his head. Then he leads the prayer, and the *Etsu* addresses a final exhortation to the new officer of state: 'Practice for-

[1] The Nupe of Patigi have preserved a linguistic distinction which has disappeared in Bida, namely, between royal princes who have received titles and those who have not. The former are called *b'rama* (their traditional salute is *lwama*, i.e. behold the *rama*), and the latter *gitsúši*.

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Civil and military officers received no salary. The payment for their services took the form of a share in the booty of slaves, horses, or other property, made in the war by their household troops; of landed property and fiefs bestowed by the king upon his loyal servants; and, finally, of status and exalted social position linked with title and office. Every promotion to a higher rank, as it involved a larger measure of political influence, involved also claims to larger and more lucrative fiefs.

The *Ndeji*,' Father of the Town', is the head of the civil nobility. He is in charge of the affairs of Bida, and all reports or complaints are brought to him first. He is closest to the king, always about his person, the most powerful of all the officers of state because he 'has the king's ear'. He and the other civil rank-holders are the *shaworaciši nya mintn*, the Councillors of the Inner House, so called because they hold their daily *nkó* (council) with the king himself.

The *ena 'kū*, a creation of the kingdom, has no parallel in the village organization. Service in the war, open to every man in Nupe, nobleman or commoner, is compulsory for this class of professional soldiers. The 'war-ranks' imply tasks for experts, and special responsibility for the execution of these tasks to king and commander of the army. Thus the different titles have specialized meanings: the *Maiyaki* is the General-in-Chief, the *Uban Dawaki* and *Dokoyiringi* are in command of the main body of horsemen, the *Sokyara* is in charge of the mounted vanguard, the *Ejuhó* of the archers, the *Sónkali* of the foot-troops, &c. The *ena Maiyaki*, too, holds its daily *nkó*, but not in the presence of the king. They, too, receive reports about the affairs of the town, and also of the country at large; but their main work is the discussion and preparation of military expeditions.

Only for the four or five highest ranks of the civil and military nobility is the order of precedence really rigid and generally valid. The significance of the remaining ranks changes frequently; bestowed as they are by the king on individuals to whom he owes gratitude or recognition for their services, they may lose their importance under another king, who has other, new men to reward and to distinguish. On pp. 100–1 is a list of the *saraki* ranks which exist in Bida to-day. Where possible I have indicated previous ranks and promotions, and also the first appointment under one or other *Etsu*.

The *ena manzi* derives its name from the fact that the judicial and religious offices which it comprises are bestowed on Mallams, men of learning and scholarship. Profound knowledge of the Mohammedan literature, which is religious and juridical in one, is the only way to these ranks which are, like all other ranks in the kingdom, bestowed by the king. But the specialized training, the very necessity of finding a man of so special an education, limits the number of possible candidates. With knowledge and scholarship the office is handed on from father to son, political influence and power of certain families do the rest, and the result is that the offices of the *Alkali*, Judge, and *Liman*, Head of the Mohammedan clergy, become hereditary almost more rigidly than

served in Patigi. Or again, the highest military rank to-day is called by the Hausa name *Maiyaki*, instead of *Somasū*, which is the old Nupe title.

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the *saraki* ranks and offices. Thus the present Chief *Alkali* of Bida as well as his assistant is himself the son of an *Alkali*. The same few families supply to-day the judges for the district courts in Nupe and indeed for many courts outside Nupe country, where the reputation of Bida scholarship has found recognition. And, as a final result of this tendency to make these offices the prerogative of a small group, we find since the time of *Etsu* Mohamadu the two offices of *Liman* and *Alkali* combined in one person.[1]

The office of the *Alkali* in Bida, the highest Mohammedan judge of the kingdom, dates back to the first period of Fulani rule. Its importance and distinction is expressed in the fact that Mallam Dendo's eldest son chose for himself the office not of a temporal ruler but of judge of Nupe. Many of the men who held these offices were of great learning and outstanding ability. Some have left behind records of the history of

1. *Ranks of the Ena Ndeji*

Title	*Tribal origin*	*Previous ranks*	*Biographical remarks*
Ndeji	Nupe from Dibo	*Magajin Gari*	Grandfather was *Ndeji*, appointed by *Etsu* Masaba; the father had no title. To-day highest official of the N.A.; head of the Emir's council.
Nyáfyenye	Fulani	*Magajin Gari*	Father and grandfather both *Ndeji*; first appointment under Usman Zaki.
Magajin Gari	Nupe	..	Father was *Nyáfyenye* and later *Ndeji*.
Sonfadakó	,,	*Gadza*	Father had no title; his first appointment was under *Etsu* Maliki, his second under *Etsu* Mamadu.
Gadza	No holder at present, but formerly a very important title.		
Sakiwa	Fulani	..	Father was *Ndeji*, titled under Umaru Majigi.
Mamasú	,,	..	Father held a lower title; he himself was titled under *Etsu* Maliki.
Etsu Basa	Benu-Nupe	..	A hereditary title held in one family.
Etsu Gbari	Nupe	..	Father was *Uban Dawaki*.
Tsadza	Fulani	*Galadiman Gari*	Father and elder brother have held same title.
Ndasú	Hausa	..	Newly introduced title.
Galadiman Gari	Fulani	..	Father was *Gadza*; he himself was appointed under *Etsu* Bello. He became later a 'ward-head' of the modern town-administration.
Kotonkomu	Nupe	..	Father held same title.

[1] There exist two different kinds of *Liman* offices: the *Liman Ratibi*, the minister of the weekday service held in the various mosques of the town, and the *Liman Jemaa*, the minister of the Friday service, which is held in the big city mosque, in the presence of the king. In every part of the town there is a *Liman* of the first kind; but there is only one *Liman Jemaa*. And it is to this highest priestly office that we referred above.

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The royal houses of Nupe, like every nobleman's house, had their host of slaves: slaves for menial work—in the house and on the land—as well as the titled slaves of respected position. At the court this latter group of slaves formed the *ena suzi*, the Order of Court Slaves, a distinguished slave *élite* into which only few selected slaves could ever hope to be admitted. From the slaves captured in war those of high birth and status, chiefs or distinguished warriors, were selected for the court. These, too, were given ranks and titles, and could rise high in the service of the king. Theirs was the specialized service of officials and trusted royal agents. There were those who looked after the king's vast household; those who were in charge of the *Etsu* Nupe's no less imposing harem—both offices formerly entrusted to eunuchs.[1] Other slaves formed the king's bodyguard and police force; they were provincial delegates, tax collectors, trusted messengers, 'liaison officers' between the king's palace and the houses of his noblemen, and between the king and the army in the field. These slaves, like the other rank-holders, owned land and held fiefs. The Nupe kings in Rabá are said to have had only four titled court slaves; the slave ranks that existed at the court of Bida some thirty years ago (and the ranks still exist, although their holders are no longer slaves) were more than three times that number. Under *Etsu* Maliki, one of the last independent kings of Nupe, the most responsible state offices were taken from royal princes and *sarakiži* and entrusted to slaves. The position of the slaves as officers of state thus seems to have overshadowed more and more all other state ranks. Slave ranks were ranks bestowed *ad personam*, and ranks bestowed by the king personally, independent of the council of princes and ministers; and this gives us the explanation for their rise in importance. The offices linked with civil and military rank also depended to some extent on the personal favour of the king. But once appointed, these men stayed on, servants of the kingdom rather than of the king. They had behind them the claims of powerful families, they were exponents of political factions, and could play on that 'balance of power' between the dynasties. The slaves were personal servants in the full sense of the word. They were brought into office, not by family claims or promotion or a rigid rule of succession, but by personal appointment, selection, and trial. They were bound to the king's service generation after generation, by the strongest bond: their position of unfree men. It frequently happened that a new *Etsu* took over the slaves who had served his predecessor and left them their ranks and possessions. The rise of the slave officials at the Fulani court is the counterpart of the rise of a powerful, dangerously independent feudal nobility.

The following is a list of slave ranks held to-day, not by slaves, but by former slaves or descendants of slaves at the court of the *Etsu* Nupe. I have again tried to indicate in what manner they received their title, and also in certain cases the office which some of them are holding to-day in the Bida Town Administration. That so many of these former slaves

[1] In the pre-Fulani kingdom the court is said to have employed only a few slaves—all eunuchs. All slave ranks which have a *nda* in their title, meaning 'father' (ranks that are still in use—see attached chart), were originally ranks reserved for eunuchs.

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group, the 'town culture' typical of Northern Nigeria. These habits and customs exist, as it were, in their own right, quite apart from questions of economic or political opportunity. But as in the growth of the kingdom certain customs and habits have become representative of the *élite*, they have set the standard of cultural desirability and superiority in general. They have imparted to habits and customs which differ from the standard the stigma of lower, less 'respectable' ways of life. In this sense, then, class differentiation as we find it in present-day Nupe can be said to represent a direct result of the growth of the state.

The intensity of class cohesion and the vividness of class consciousness are determined by 'the amount and ease of social mobility', that is, inter-class movement.[1] We have denied to the economic and social stratification that obtains in the Nupe village the character of a social class, on the grounds that the higher and highest social orders were potentially attainable to all—universal mobility contradicts the conception of social class. Exclusion of all social mobility, on the other hand, would turn social class into hereditary caste. Nupe society, a true class society, steers a middle course.

The social classes in Nupe represent to a large extent self-recruited, closed groups. A man born of commoners as a rule remains a commoner, a craftsman a craftsman, and the ranks of nobility are filled with men of noble birth. But there exists promotion from grade to grade within the class, and a certain amount of inter-class mobility. Inter-class mobility in the fullest sense, that is, formal adoption into the higher orders, is attained, as we have seen, through service in war and, to less extent, through wealth and clientship. Its scope is narrow and closely controlled: there exist only thirty to forty ranks to which an 'outsider' may aspire, and only seven out of the thirty-seven civil and military ranks enumerated in our lists were granted to men whose families had held no rank previously. Moreover, adoption into the titled classes means only gaining a first foothold on the long social ladder. All social rise possible in Nupe is rigidly canalized by the hierarchy of ranks and grades. Here, viewed from the angle of social mobility, the Nupe rank system reveals its full significance: it controls and restricts as much as it aids social advancement. In the interest of governing the extensive kingdom, carrying on its wars, and administering its subject groups, political power had to be distributed and delegated. Individuals whose services were of value had to be attracted by the promise of admission to privileged positions. But by making social rise subject to the formal investiture and, above all, by admitting individuals only gradually, through a step-by-step promotion, to increased power, the ruling class could regulate the infiltration of new blood as well as the accumulation of power by its members. We have seen that ranks and promotion are subject to changing political fortune; even the meaning of ranks and offices may change under different sovereigns. Recognition can be withheld or withdrawn from men who might prove dangerous or from families already too powerful. The hierarchy of ranks thus helps to pre-

[1] M. Ginsberg, op. cit., p. 163.

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serve the precarious balance of power in the feudal state. It becomes, in the hands of the established ruling group, an efficient weapon to safeguard their class privileges.

Social mobility of a more fluid, indirect kind, which admits individuals to a close association with the privileged classes and indirectly to a certain share in their privileges, reaches a much larger proportion of the population. It is upheld by the institution of clientship and by the existence of the Mallam intelligentsia 'between the classes'. The possibilities of social mobility, above all, the extensive possibilities of this indirect mobility, account for the lack of cohesion among the lower classes of Nupe, or at least of Bida. The conspicuous symbolism of rank and the rigid definition of the social estates cannot but stimulate class-consciousness: commoners will always describe themselves as *tálaka*, and men of rank will leave you in no doubt about their consequential position. But this class-consciousness is blurred by thoughts and prospects of a social career that might raise anyone to a higher estate. Concern about betterment rather than sentiments of group solidarity define the nature of class-consciousness in Nupe. This can be seen most clearly in the attitude of the younger generation, who are just planning their future career. Only in two social groups do we find a more strongly pronounced and self-contained consciousness of common fate and common, class-bound interests; they are characteristically groups in which mobility, direct or indirect, plays hardly any part—the closed group of guild-organized artisans and (in the framework of their scattered communities) the peasantry.

How far social mobility took the form of local mobility, that is, of a movement to the town in the attempt to bridge over the cultural and social gulf between townspeople and peasantry, we cannot say. If it existed, it could only have been of very limited scope. For there were strong natural limits to such a development, above all, the scarcity of land near the capital.

Now to be complete and convincing, social rise must go hand in hand with assimilation to the habits and modes of life typical of the higher classes. This, in Nupe, proves no stumbling-block. The familiar instances of 'parvenus' who, though adopted into the higher social order, do not fit into the picture of its social life are unknown. The explanation is that cultural assimilation of this kind is much more widespread than actual mobility. The mechanisms of social mobility which we have enumerated all accord their benefits to individuals, not to groups; on the contrary, individuals may succeed where groups (local communities, tribal sections) would fail to achieve that improvement of social conditions and that increased security bound up with classes. But the assimilation of which we have just spoken must be regarded as a qualified form of social mobility which includes groups and whole sections of the population. Whole groups are free at least to imitate the external characteristics of the higher social orders. Where economic conditions allow it commoners and peasants adopt habits and modes of life of their betters—fashions in dress and housing, their way of talk, their food habits, and the forms of entertainment which they patronize. They also

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not as good as that of a farmer?' There is no evidence, incidentally, that physical disability, an ailment which might impair their working capacity, is a reason for sending boys to Mallam schools. The choice of the Mallam profession is, in the full sense of the word, a free choice of profession.[1]

The Mallam schools both in Bida and in the peasant districts are steadily increasing. The Nigerian Census mentions over 1,000 Koran schools in Niger Province, most of which are found in Nupe Emirate. I have estimated that Bida town possesses over 100 Koran schools, with over 1,000 pupils (out of a population of 24,000, with 5,000 male children). Kacha has fifteen Koran schools, Kutigi, a much more primitive and semi-pagan village, six, of which two already give higher instruction. This spreading of Mohammedan education leaves no doubt that parents increasingly desire their children to receive the benefits of Mohammedan learning. We have to accept this as a general trend in modern Nupe society, not so much towards true education—which few of the boys will ever attain—as towards the higher social status—the status of a leisured-class intelligentsia—which the position of a Mallam, rightly or wrongly, suggests.

Earlier in this book I have referred to the profession of Mallams as one of the mechanisms of social mobility. I have also called Mohammedan education, by means of which the religion and, indirectly, the whole spiritual background of the ruling classes is diffused throughout the country, one of the 'binding forces' of the Nupe state. Here we have found concrete evidence to support these statements. Let me summarize the main conclusions which we can draw from the present discussion. First, the profession of Mallams comprises contrasts of wealth and rank, which occur nowhere else in the framework of a single profession. The only common feature is that of a life without manual work, and of a certain social status raised above that of the ordinary commoner. Secondly, the Mallam profession is the only profession which we discovered in Nupe which is not ruled by the motive of material gains. On the contrary, people will sacrifice even the security of work on the land for the meagre and insecure income that goes with the rise in status and the attainment of the life of the leisured class.

AGE-GRADE ASSOCIATIONS

The Nupe name for age-grade association is *ena gbarúfuši*, lit. 'society' or 'association of the young men'.[2] Although nearly every Nupe boy or

[1] I had wondered whether there was any relation between the professional choice and the size of the family, whether perhaps in large families a son would be more likely to study for Mallam than in small families, where every member would be needed for farm-work. Then again, I thought it possible that in these days of the breaking-up of the family-unit orphans would be placed more readily in Mallam schools. Neither correlation, however, is true—as is shown in these figures: of 32 students of farming stock 9 were only sons, 10 were one of two sons, 9 had brothers who also studied the Koran, and 4 were orphans.

[2] Informants who have picked up a few words of pidgin-English translated *ena* as 'company'.

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long fruitless discussions also occur, both in town and village, and sometimes a compromise has to be effected by introducing a special title (with the word *Tsowa* before any rank, equivalent to 'vice-' or 'sub-'), which will satisfy a refractory member without upsetting the arrangement at large. Severe degradation, on the other hand, is rare, as it can be easily circumvented in these associations which are not compulsory, and cannot force members to accept their status. This is a typical instance: A very ambitious and vain young man of Bida who had held high ranks in previous *ena*, but was given a very low rank in a senior grade, resented this treatment as unjust; he could, however, do nothing except to show his disdain by disinteresting himself in the association, and staying away from all their meetings. Actually he never told me of his shameful treatment when we discussed his association with the *ena*; I learned of it only by chance when, examining a certain association, I came across his name on the list of members.

The village *ena* comprises one rank which can be won only in strict competition. We have spoken of this rank already (p. 250): it carries the title *Sode*, and is bestowed on the best farmer of the group. Sometimes there is also a second farmer's rank, won in the same way for which, rather incongruously, the title *Maiyaki*, 'Minister of War', has been chosen. These ranks are taken only in the highest and middle grade, and are won in open competition at the first of the more important *egbe* occasions of the season, frequently at the *egbe* performed on the farms of the village chief. Traditionally, the title *Sode* ranked next to that of group captain in importance and precedence. To-day it has been degraded to a lower place on the scale of ranks. Of course, neither the title nor the particular qualification for which it is bestowed is recognized in Bida. The rank of *Sode* is also the only rank that may change hands (at least in theory) during the term of the *ena*. Although this happens very rarely (I have not met with any actual instance), all people agree that if at one of the occasions of collective farm-work an appointed *Sode* proved himself to be inferior in skill to another member of the *ena*, he would have to surrender his title.

Age-grade ranks are largely copied from the political rank-system obtaining in the community to which the *ena* belongs. It is not a very exact copy—although the *ena* tends to arrange its ranks according to the order of precedence which they follow in the political hierarchy. In Bida the distinctions between the different classes of political ranks are not observed, and military and civil ranks, office titles and titles of the royal nobility, are bestowed indiscriminately. The village *ena* remains more faithful to the rank-system of the community, and would, for example, adopt its typical, possibly uncommon, titles of elders. But as the membership of the *ena*—especially of the junior grades—may be considerably larger than the number of titled village elders, ranks from outside the traditional rank-system may have to be introduced, preferably from the rank-system of the capital. The younger generation is indeed always ready and eager to adopt such innovations. Rank-systems of heterogeneous nature, and rather arbitrary precedence are the result. However, we must not forget that the rank-systems of many villages ar

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former case, too, it is sometimes considered advisable to make sure of a propitious day; but in the latter case divination may be the only means for discovering the appropriate religious remedy. Let me mention in passing the widespread conviction that even the Emir of Nupe consults diviners (of the Mohammedan variety), in large numbers and 'for whole weeks at a time', to aid him in his multifarious problems: which belief, in spite of its circumstantial nature, is unsupported by such evidence as I could muster.[1]

One more word about the frequency of the visits one pays the diviner. For the townspeople no rule can be laid down; persons who seek advice on trade, travels, promotion in rank or other specific questions will obviously consult the diviner *ad hoc*, whenever the need happens to arise. It is somewhat different in the villages, where people also go to the diviner simply to have their fortunes told. Here individuals would pay fairly regular visits, once or twice a month, or at least once in two or three months. I have, however, spoken to villagers who had not been to the diviner for as much as five or six months.

The diviner is paid a small fee every time he is consulted. The fee is neither rigidly laid down nor claimed in advance. In Bida, the diviner is usually paid in money, though a bowl of rice or a few kolanuts may be thrown in, the client paying according to his ability, between a penny and sixpence. In the village one mostly pays in food or kolanuts. The diviners themselves regard the payments as 'gifts', and would strongly deny that they are divining 'for money'. No diviner could in fact live on what his skill earns him; nor does a diviner's reputation add in any way to his status in this rank-conscious society. Divining is merely an additional vocation, prized for the mystic wisdom and power it implies rather than for material or social gains.

This brings me to the last point, the social position of the diviner himself. Divination is essentially 'learning'—a skill that can be acquired by anyone having a 'good head'; if it is hereditary in a family it is so only incidentally. A great many diviners learned the art, in their youth, from another expert, paying for the tuition. One Bida diviner, for example, a man of about sixty-five, had learned divination when he was fifteen, studying for ten months, 'every day as in school'. Another had learned the craft from a stranger he met on his wanderings when a young man. Two diviners made an exceptional and unorthodox claim; while admitting that they had to acquire the skill, they maintained that they had 'learned it from God', by inspiration as it were. The majority of the diviners I met were also farmers; one was a barber by

[1] According to tradition, the old kings of Nupe had numerous official diviners among their retinue; this practice has certainly disappeared.